

# Social democracy and communism betrays the revolution

Originally – The Wisdom of a Proverb

Camillo Berneri

1<sup>st</sup> February, 1937

The Swiss Federal Council was the first to inaugurate in the name of ‘neutrality’ a regime of persecution against the friends of Free Spain, desiring by this servile and reactionary attitude to pay homage to the ogres of Berlin and Rome.

An outcry of scandal then arose from the synagogues of Social-Democracy. And Stalin’s admirers protested vehemently.

Soon after, the Belgian government, which is composed of Social Democratic ministers, expelled Canon Gallegos and Father Lobo, Catholic priests guilty merely of having declared at private meetings their solidarity with the legal government of Spain.

Then there was the British government dragging out from the dust of centuries a law of 1870 which punishes the enrolment of British citizens in foreign militias.

The United States in their turn brought up for discussion a law of 1811 forbidding North American citizens enrolling abroad.

Finally, the French government obtained from the Chamber of Deputies full powers to surround Republican Spain with a ‘cordon sanitaire’ against the influx of foreign volunteers. And these powers, it received them from the Communist and Socialist groups in parliament. There is nothing surprising in the attitude of the Socialists. It coincides with that of ‘Populaire’ and only serves to confirm it. But the attitude of the Communists constitutes a scandalous change of policy. The English Communists had protested at the blockade of volunteers. Ted Barnales, head of the London section of the English Communist Party had declared in one of his speeches on 11<sup>th</sup> November last,

“For or each German soldier in Spain, we will send a seasoned English fighter. This is our reply to the decision taken by the government to prevent volunteers departing for Spain.”

And ‘Humanite’ at the news that the French government intended to forbid the enrolment of volunteers burst out in repeated protests. A platonic gesture on the part of the French Social Democrat and Stalinist leaders, bound up to the very end with the wet-blanket government and the human ostrich.

The 'Petit Parisien' of 15<sup>th</sup> December announced a 'strengthening of control' on the part of France, and Gabriel Peri wrote in 'Humanite'

"Petit Parisien is the unofficial monitor of the Quai d'Orsay. We would like to know whether the plan which it is announcing has, as the Petit Parisien indicates, the approval of M. Delbos. We would like to know if it has the approval of the President of the Council. If not we would like to read a denial as soon as possible."

Instead of a prompt denial, the 'Populaire' of 8<sup>th</sup> January wrote,

"We believe that there would be no difficulty in adopting the advice of the German government which is proposing, in its reply, to remove from Spain, all foreigners taking part in the fighting including the political agitators and propagandists. with the aim of re-establishing the state of affairs existing in August 1936."

And it concluded,

"We must not lose any time in useless investigation of their intentions by trying to discover the 'traps' which there may be in the replies of Berlin and Rome. There is a certain way of overcoming all difficulties. It is by applying and making all others apply a policy of non-intervention in Spain; by eliminating from Spain all combatants who are not Spanish. We must do it at and do it quickly."

With Peri, Cachin, Vaillant – Couturier and company protested. But Moscow took the helm. And who would associate themselves directly in the name of the Communist group in parliament with the Blumist 'faction?' Peri was the very man, he who had maintained with the greatest obstinacy and vehemence that France should have a policy overtly in favour of the Spanish Republic. The buffoons and idiots of Bolshevism are as bad as the buffoons and idiots of Social Democracy. The Socialist parliamentary group trampled on the last resolution of the executive committees of the IOS and the FSI which declares,

"that the maintenance of peace, which is the supreme asset of the workers of all countries and, consequently, the primary concern of governments under Socialist control or with Socialist participation, can only be assured on the condition that Democracy opposes an attitude bent on blackmail or fascist menaces."

The Communist parliamentary group, for its part, completely denied an infinite number of explicit declarations against French 'neutrality' declarations made at its meetings and published in its papers, mainly in 'Humanite.'

Non-intervention plays into the hands of Hitler and Mussolini, and thus of Franco. The English Memorandum and the French moratorium proposing to the German and Italian governments that they stop sending volunteers to Spain go back to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1936. The Italo – German reply came on 7<sup>th</sup> January. Thirty-five days of ... meditation, thirty-five days of massive dispatch of men and military equipment to Franco.

The Italian government recruited 'volunteers' by means of orders sent through the military districts; it directed towards Spain by means of force, men recruited to work in Ethiopia, it concentrated volunteers for Spain in the barracks. it even used common law convicts to swell the

ranks of the volunteers: it created concentrations of expeditionary forces in la Spezia, Eboli, Salerno and Cagliari: and it transported them in the State ships as far as Spanish Morocco.

After the bombings carried out over Spanish territory by Italian planes, using for their base the airfield of Elmas after the occupation of Majorca, we have all the elements of proof to show that Italy has intervened militarily in the Spanish Civil War. Mussolini has no intention of renouncing Spain. 'Roma Fascista' does not hesitate to declare. "We are fighting and we shall win in Spain." 'Il Giornale d'Italia' implies that French control of access routes to Spain on land will be virtual. Hitler and Mussolini are demanding the impossible of the English and French governments: like, for example, suppressing propaganda in favour of Spain and removing from Spain all foreign anti-fascists.

The bad faith of Mussolini and Hitler appears with as much clarity as the over careful stupidity of Blum. Mussolini, in contempt for all international law, has sent at least 20,000 men to Spain, and there are besides (according to 'Ami du Peuple') at least 30,000 German soldiers in Spain. The Italian government and the German government will continue to send men, arms and ammunition whatever promises they make.

The Anglo – French neutrality has been is and will always be a hypocritical intervention in favour of Spanish, German and Italian Fascism.

To accept the supervisory blockade, is the same as putting on the same place the loyal government and an army of rebels, it is the same as putting Europe in the dilemma: war or the triumph of fascism. And the triumph of fascism is the inevitable war of the very near future.

The Blumist policy has never had a clear and coherent line of action because it is dominated by fear and a tendency to compromise. It is a Social Democratic policy.

The French Communist Party, by adhering to this policy, has erased one of the few fine pages in its history, The international repercussions will have profound consequences. As will the repercussions on French internal politics. But the most important thing for us is, for the moment, to examine the needs of our struggle in Spain in relation to the new situation. We will deal with that elsewhere. Today we are experiencing an agonising and troubling emotion as we see the wisdom of the popular proverb being confirmed: "May God guard me from my friends. I can take care of my enemies." (i.e. With friends like these, who needs enemies? — Translator's note).

Spain, surrounded by declared enemies and false friends will not continue on its own path any less because of them. We wish with all our filial love for this magnificent people that this path will lead to the shining heights of triumph. But even if it leads us to the deepest abyss of defeat, we would always have the consolation of having wanted to be with the innocent victims and not with the murderers of unarmed people; of having defended the sacred cause of liberty and justice and not the return to tyranny and feudal privilege; of having taken part in the melee, choosing our side decisively, and having rejected the degrading share of cowardly and stupid compromises.

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